SIX FACTS OF THE AFTER LIFE

EDMUND SINKER, M.A.

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THE PLACE OF MEETING.

SIX FACTS OF THE AFTER LIFE

BY

EDMUND SINKER, M.A.

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TO THE

DEAR MEMORY OF MY

FATHER AND MOTHER

NOW IN PARADISE

FOREWORD

THESE six addresses were delivered at the mid-day services during Lent at Christ Church in the city of Bristol on Wednesdays, and at Malvern Priory on Fridays.

The large congregations testified to the deep interest people take in the subject of the after life. So many kindly asked me to print them that I could hardly well refuse, though I am quite aware that much has been already printed on this subject. But the subject is of such vital interest and moment, that perhaps there is room for the opinions of the ordinary average man. And as the majority of the human race are just ordinary men like the writer, it may not be without interest to see how the ordinary man thinks on this matter.

It should be remembered that they are sermons, and therefore suffer from the compression necessary for a sermon in these days. With the exception of the first, I have printed them almost exactly as they were preached, at least as far as I was able, for they were preached from notes. The first one I have expanded somewhat, as it

was quite impossible to do justice to the subject in twenty-five minutes. But apart from that, I have thought it best to leave them as they were spoken: for to do otherwise would have meant writing another book, and "of making many books there is no end!"

For many of the thoughts in these sermons I am indebted to so many writers that it would be quite impossible for me to acknowledge my indebtedness in every case, and indeed in reading widely on any subject other men's thoughts are apt to become assimilated unconsciously with one's own, and so I must express my gratitude in general terms.

E. S.

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SIX FACTS OF THE AFTER LIFE

I

CONTINUITY

OR PERSONALITY PERSISTS BEYOND BODILY DEATH

"If a man die, shall he live again?"—JOB xiv. 14.

THIS question has been asked all down the ages. No definite answer had been given or could be given till Some One came over from the other side to tell us. To many of us His evidence is conclusive. Some would like more evidence. The matter is so vital that we naturally seek to know all we can. We all must die one day. What happens to us then? This question of questions has become even more important for us since we have almost heard the rustling of the wings of the Angel of Death as he has carried away so many of our bravest and best on land and sea to that bourn from which no traveller has returned. What has happened to these brave young lives?

We must all pass one day through "the White

Gate," and so I propose to give six talks on this subject. I shall try to keep clear of vain fancies and imaginations, and keep strictly to sober facts. These addresses will make no pretension to great learning, but I shall endeavour to tell you how it strikes a man of ordinary common sense, who has read much and thought more about the after life.

And to-day we will take the subject of continuity. Death is not the end. "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that . . . !" Thousands of years from now the spiritual being within you, that which is really "you," will be living still, with powers of feeling and thought. That which we call "death" is the end of the first stage of our existence, but that death is really a birth into a new and far more wonderful career, stretching out into the far future, age after age, æon after æon, the prospect of which should stir the very life-blood within us. "Bury me if you can catch me," said Socrates, as he drank the poisonous draught of hemlock.

Yet we have to face death, and to some he is still the king of terrors. But believe me, death is not so terrible. What is terrible is the thought that it is so. If only we could learn how false that thought is, then death would no longer terrify us. For what lies beyond the white gate? God and He Who died for us.

There is a touching story told of a Bishop and a child. The little girl lay dying, and the thought of death frightened her. The Bishop went to see her and tried to comfort her. He said to her: "You wouldn't be afraid, would you? if I were to take you up in my arms and carry you into the next room." "No, not at all," was the answer. And then the Bishop explained that One who loved children far more than he did was only going to take her in His loving arms and carry her into "the next room." And with that she was comforted. That is the meaning of death, at any rate to those who believe in the Man of Sorrows.

In that beautiful play "The Blue Bird," by Maurice Maeterlinck, some of you will remember the graphic scene in the churchyard. The two children, Tyltyl and Mytyl, in their search for the Blue Bird, go into a country graveyard at midnight. They are both frightened but very brave. At the appointed hour Tyltyl turns the diamond, and after a terrifying minute of silence the crosses totter, the mounds open, and the slabs rise up. Then from the gaping tombs an efflorescence gradually arises and transforms the graveyard into a fairy-like garden. The two children, holding each other by the hand, seek for the trace of the tombs; and Mytyl, looking in the grass, asks, "Where are the dead?" to

which her little brother replies: "There are no dead."

"There are no dead." The poet is right. A churchyard is one of the emptiest places on God's earth. "There are no dead." Death is passing from one sphere into another. *Mors janua vitæ:* "Death is the gate of life."

But how may we know this? Well, we have three guides to help us: Reason, Revelation, and Science.

I.—Reason

There are many proofs that reason can offer to us with regard to a life beyond the grave; and though it is only fair to say that any one taken singly will not carry us far, yet it must not be forgotten that the cumulative effect of the proofs will, at any rate, make a reasonable man admit that there is something to be said for the belief in another life. Let us see what they are.

(i.) *The Desire for Immortality.* — There can be no doubt that this desire, like the belief in a God, is almost universal. The desire for immortality is no less persistent than profound. Springing up in the earliest ages, it has survived to this day. It is felt alike by savage races and highly civilized ones, by illiterate peasants as well as by the imperial thinkers of our race. It has to be accounted for. It is in itself a prophecy

of its fulfilment. We cannot believe that the One Who implanted this desire in the heart of His creatures is a mocking fiend. That which God promises He always performs. And so we may be certain that this desire would never have been woven into the very fibres of our being unless we were destined for immortality.

(ii.) *The Injustice of Life.*—This, to one who, like the preacher, has lived some sixteen years in the slums of the East End of London, is a proof of great weight. Let me take one example only. I remember a young man in my parish in the East End, whose life was sad beyond words. He suffered from cancer. In the hope of saving his life they cut off his right leg in the London Hospital. Shortly afterwards the disease attacked his other limb, and so his left leg was amputated. Then for a while there was no appearance of this dread scourge. But not for long. For when I came to know him, a huge cancerous growth, as large as my two fists, had appeared on his chest, and it led to a painful death. Many a time he used to ask me why he had to suffer so. He was an earnest Christian lad, and I had no hesitation in telling him that God chooses some souls, that can bear it, for the highest honour of all—namely, that of filling up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ *in their flesh* for His Body's sake, which is the

Church (Col. i. 24). But whilst this is true, one could not help asking oneself again and again why some should have to suffer so, whilst others escape scot-free; why some should have everything their heart could desire, whilst others, amongst whom I lived, should have such difficulty in making both ends meet and know the bitterness of poverty. There can be but one answer, if there be a God of love, and that is, there must be another life where the glaring injustices of earth shall be righted.

(iii.) *The Incompleteness of Life.* — Here is another argument in favour of Immortality. Man's body, it is true, is completely developed; but our mental and moral capabilities do not reach their plenitude in three-score years and ten. Many would say with Theodore Parker on his deathbed: "I wish I could carry on, carry out, my work. I have only half used my powers." The fact is that our endowments are altogether out of proportion to a life of a few years. They carry with them implications of eternity.

> "The facts of life confirm the hope
> That, in a world of larger scope,
> What here is faithfully begun
> Will be completed—not undone."

(iv.) *The Greatness of Man.*—In these days the telescope has taught us we are not so great as

we think we are; but on the other hand the microscope has corrected this idea, and brought things to a right proportion. The telescope has brought within our range something of the immense size of God's universe. Millions upon millions of stars and probably thousands upon thousands of planets! How small, how insignificant man is! Yet this seemingly insignificant being has measured the distance and ascertained the weight of the dog-star Sirius, and surely one feels more inclined to bow before the inscrutable mystery of his genius than to prostrate oneself before a mass of matter. It is the mind of man that is great; the universe is huge, but not great in the same sense.

> "Were I as tall to reach the pole,
> Or grasp the ocean in my span,
> I must be measured by my soul—
> The mind's the standard of the man."

And further, even if the telescope has made man small, the microscope has taught him he is not so small after all. During this dreadful scourge of influenza many of you may have been inoculated. If so, then you may know that several million bacilli were thrust into your arm as the needle pierced your skin. Very many of those bacilli found plenty of room and to spare, on the very point of the needle! So man after all is not so

small. But the fact is, that size has nothing to do with the matter. Man's greatness is not to be sought in his physical bulk, but in his spiritual, moral, and mental qualities; man is a living soul, and immortality is implied in the nature of the soul.

(v.) *The Law of Evolution.*—This law, so far as I understand it, teaches us that man is the supreme climax of an age-long creation. It teaches us that, so far as the bodily structure of man is concerned, it took ages upon ages to produce him. It says nothing—it can say nothing—on the spiritual aspect of man, when God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and man became a living *soul.* But it certainly does insist on the fact that from the single-celled moneron which dwelt in the slimy ooze at the bottom of the sea, after untold ages of evolution there emerged at length man. Perhaps most of us are in a position neither to affirm nor deny this. But the acceptance of this seems to me to give a far grander and more rational view of the unhurried working of Almighty God. And this rational process cannot come to an irrational conclusion, it cannot end in an anti-climax. To suppose that what has been evolved at such a cost will suddenly collapse at death is impossible of belief. If man has been evolved from lower to ever higher types through countless ages, it surely

seems more reasonable to suppose that when the great change we call death comes, the law of evolution will still hold good, and that an ever higher existence awaits us.

Now these proofs that reason offers us do not, we admit, settle the matter of immortality without a shadow of doubt, but we do claim that they make a thinking man admit that there is something to be said in favour of a life beyond the grave.

II.—Revelation

When we come to Revelation, we come at once to surer ground. We can only point to the evidence so far as time will allow. The evidence is great, and it all centres round one historical fact. That fact is the Resurrection of Christ. The rising of Christ from the dead is the earnest of our rising too: for He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Let us then approach the evidence for the Resurrection of Christ. It is to be found, of course, in the New Testament, but not entirely nor only there. There are some outside facts to be considered as well. Criticism of the New Testament has assured us of the general trustworthiness of the Gospel accounts. We need not hesitate to accept their witness. They all write about the Resurrection of Christ. St. Mark, the earliest, the "interpreter" of St. Peter, gives

in all probability the evidence of the chief of the Apostles. St. Luke, who had ample opportunities of getting information from members of the Church at Jerusalem who had seen the risen Lord, is our next witness. He is followed by St. Matthew, or rather the early writer whose book is called by his name, and which is almost certainly based on St. Matthew's work. And St. John, who was an eyewitness (for the writer of the fourth Gospel, even if not St. John himself, was certainly an eyewitness of the facts he relates), writes his "spiritual" Gospel towards the close of the first century.

In reading these Gospels, we are reading records written from thirty to sixty years after the events. But it is to be remembered that the writers are editors rather than authors. Behind them was the oral tradition, the teaching of the Church, and they simply reduced the oral tradition to writing: for the Gospels are not the Gospel of, but the Gospel *according to*, Matthew, Mark, etc. This brings us right up to the very event of the Resurrection itself. But in addition to the Gospels we have another and earlier witness—namely, St. Paul. No sober critic could be found who would deny that St. Paul wrote the first Epistle to the Corinthians, or that it was written about the year 53, and so less than a quarter of a century from the Resurrection itself.

In this Epistle St. Paul not only asserts the Resurrection of Christ, but he gives a large number of details. But St. Paul's witness goes a good deal farther back than the time of his writing the first Epistle to the Corinthians. In his list of appearances he says that the risen Lord appeared to St. Peter and to St. James, naming these two Apostles only. Now it is worthy of note that these two were the only Apostles whom St. Paul visited when he went to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and it is quite reasonable to suppose that he gained his information from these two eyewitnesses. This brings St. Paul's evidence to the year 38, within ten years of the Resurrection itself.

These witnesses are men on whom we can rely. Let us, then, turn to their evidence.

(i.) *The Empty Tomb.*—The four Evangelists all record that the tomb was found empty on the Easter morning. It *has* to be accounted for. The Bible narrative gives a simple though wonderful explanation—namely, that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. Either He did so, or else someone must have removed the Body. Mary Magdalene thought at first that Joseph's Gardener had done so, but she was soon undeceived on that point. The Jews spread the story that the Body had been taken away in the night by the disciples. But the tomb was care-

fully guarded. And supposing the disciples had removed It, what could they have done with It? It is not so easy to get rid of a dead body. Besides, is it likely that they would have preached the Resurrection if they had really hidden the dead Body in some out-of-the-way corner? They were not the men to preach a calculated lie, still less were they likely to be willing to die a martyr's death for the purposes of deception. It is asking too much of human nature to believe a thing like that. And if the enemies of Christ had removed the Body, why did they not produce It when the Apostles preached the Resurrection? They certainly would have done so if they could. Nothing so surely would have silenced the Apostles. And so it is perfectly true to say that the empty tomb remains an unanswered and unanswerable argument of the truth of the Resurrection.

(ii.) *The Witness of the Grave Clothes.*—St. John, who was an eyewitness of the scene, tells us a remarkable fact, that although the Body had disappeared the grave clothes remained behind. This is an extraordinary thing, almost past belief, if the Body had been taken away by somebody. But St. John tells us more than the mere fact that the grave clothes were left behind. He tells us that the shroud was *laid flat* on the slab on which the Body of Christ was laid, and that

the napkin that was about His head still kept its "twirled" shape which it had when wrapped around the head of our Lord, and was lying apart, almost certainly on the little ledge at the end of the slab, where His head had rested. The grave clothes had not been thrown carelessly on the floor of the cave, nor was the ground covered with the large amount of spices which Nicodemus, as a token of love, had brought for the burial of the Master. It seems reasonable to suppose that the Body of Christ just simply passed through the grave clothes, leaving them exactly where they had been before, except that the shroud from the weight of the spices fell flat, as St. John said was the case, and the napkin, not being weighted with spices, kept its somewhat stiff shape, as might naturally be expected. This is a reasonable interpretation of the facts of the grave clothes, and corroborates the Gospel evidence of the Resurrection.

(iii.) *The Appearances.*—These appearances of Christ lasted over forty days. Let us admit at once that it is somewhat difficult to reconcile the various accounts. But the writers, though they may and do differ as to the details, are quite unanimous as to the facts.

Christ appeared, according to one account, first of all to a woman, one from whom He had cast out seven devils. Women surely deserved

this honour granted to their sex, for no woman in the Bible Story was ever an enemy of Christ. No woman ever denied or betrayed or persecuted the Master as men did. And the first appearance granted to one who had been a sinner is also surely a matter of joy and hope to us all, showing that He Who had been the friend of publicans and sinners before His death, remains the same true friend afterwards. He appeared also alone to St. Peter, who had denied Him; and to St. James, "the brother of our Lord," who afterwards became the first Bishop of Jerusalem: and so no longer did it remain true that "His brethren did not believe in Him." He appeared to two who were taking an afternoon walk in the country. He appeared several times to the Apostles, or a majority of them. And once He appeared to five hundred people at once, more than half of whom were still living when St. Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, and could therefore be produced as witnesses, if necessary, of what they saw and heard. And He appeared last of all to St. Paul on the road to Damascus. Now these appearances were not mere visions, nor ghostly apparitions. They were the appearances of a Person Who spoke and ate with the Apostles. He still bore on His Body the five wounds which they could see with their eyes. And to convince them that He was the

same Jesus, He invited them to handle Him and see: "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." The Apostles had the evidence of sight, hearing, and touch, and they were absolutely convinced of the truth of the Resurrection.

And it is to be added that these appearances were totally unexpected by the Apostles and friends of Christ. And therefore the suggestion that they were merely "subjective" visions is ruled out of court at once. The Apostles knew that Christ was dead and buried, and no ray of hope was left in them that they would ever see Him again. And a "subjective" vision can only come to those who expect it and are looking for it. Therefore the appearances of Christ were entirely "objective," and form a strong proof of the truth of the Resurrection.

(iv.) *The Change in the Apostles.* — Every effect demands a preceding cause. Before the Resurrection the disciples did not show much courage. Before the arrest all His disciples forsook Him and fled. The chiefest of them was frightened to the pitch of denial, by a servant maid. And then suddenly these men, who before had been so cowardly, become as brave as lions. Cowards become heroes. Weak men become full of power. Peter, who was angry and terrified in

the palace of the High Priest, now boldly faces him and calmly says: "We ought to obey God rather than men." Something must have happened to change these men so completely. It was a wonderful change, and it demanded a wonderful cause. We are not left in doubt as to what it was. The disciples believed they had seen their Lord, and that He had filled them with the power of His Resurrection. So once again this adds further testimony to the truth of the Resurrection.

(v.) *The Existence of the Church.*—Here we are face-to-face with a fact we can see for ourselves, and history tells us how the Church has come down all the ages. Again, it has to be accounted for. Whether we take the word church in its narrow sense, and refer to all the buildings throughout the world erected in honour of, and for the worship of, Jesus Christ; or whether we take it in its truer sense, and refer to the great company of believers, we are confronted by a marvellous fact when we remember it all springs from the Man of Nazareth. Could the Church have existed all these centuries if it was founded on a lie? Could the Church exist to-day if the Resurrection were only the dream of deluded visionaries? Could the Church still be a power in the world to-day if Christianity be not true? "The Church is built on an empty tomb" is a cheap and idle sneer; but it has some truth in it,

for it is an abiding witness that the tomb is empty because her Master rose from it.

(vi.) *The Witness of Sunday.*—This point has not been sufficiently emphasized. The Jews had been taught that God chose the seventh day of the week as His own particular day. They were very rigid in observing it. The Jew is emphatically conservative, and yet the Apostles who were Jews did not hesitate to fix upon the first day of the week as God's own particular day, and the day of worship was transferred from Saturday to Sunday. Such action on their part is only to be understood by the fact of the Resurrection, which took place on that day. Therefore, not only Easter Day, but every Sunday as it comes round, commemorates the Resurrection, and is a witness to its truth.

(vii.) *The Witness of the Holy Communion.*—It is true that in this sacred feast we commemorate the death and passion of our Redeemer, but it is not a dead Christ but a gloriously risen and living Saviour we worship in that blessed Sacrament. And therefore every Holy Eucharist is a giving of thanks for the Resurrection, and carries with it to the Christian worshippers a sure earnest of His and their Resurrection.

(viii.) *The Witness of the Soul.*—This proof is only of force to those who have experienced it: but to such it is the strongest proof of all. Christ

speaks to the soul, and therefore He is alive. Ultimately the proof of the Divinity of Christ lies in spiritual experience, yours for you and mine for me; and in order to keep this from being merely individual and subjective, it is strengthened and corroborated by the experience, written or spoken, of others. Spiritual experience is a fact, for there are facts in the spiritual realm as well as in the physical: and once one has heard the voice of Jesus within the soul, one is for ever assured of the truth of the Resurrection.

Now all these proofs from Revelation of the Resurrection of Christ are, when taken together, of such great weight that it is indeed hard to see how any could be found to deny its truth; and the Resurrection of Christ carries with it a distinct implication of our future resurrection, and an absolute promise from Him Who rose the third day from the dead that we shall be sharers with Him in the risen life.

The message of Christianity is that Christ is alive and present with us for evermore. For what, after all, is Christianity? It is, as Bishop Westcott used to teach us at Cambridge, not merely a system of dogma, or a code of ethics, but a Personal Presence.

Therefore, if Reason forces me to admit that there is something to be said for a life beyond

the grave, Revelation bids me believe with all my heart and soul in the continuity of life in this world and the next.

III.—Science

But can we go further? Do we need to do so? Can the faith of Revelation become the fact of Science? There has arisen of late a school of writers who do not hesitate to affirm that in this matter they walk now, not by faith, but by sight. And among them are some eminent scientists and doctors.

Many of us will remember the time when the idea of a life beyond the grave was, if not laughed at, at any rate met by a "non possumus" attitude, "We cannot tell," or deliberately set aside by scientists as not belonging to their province. But this position has to some extent been deliberately set aside. The President of the British Association said, in 1913, at Birmingham, in his address on continuity, as follows: "The facts which I have examined have convinced me that memory and affection are not limited to that association with matter by which alone they can manifest themselves here and now, and that personality persists beyond bodily death." And further on, he adds: "The universe is a larger thing than we have any conception of, and no one method of search will exhaust its treasures."

These words show a great advance in the scientific attitude on this matter. And further, psychical research is making its voice heard. When one finds serious and sober students of this difficult subject—men whose names are almost household words—stating calmly and deliberately that they have been in communication with the spirit world, it really will not do just to throw their opinions on one side as of no moment. They offer their proofs to the world, and wish them examined, and we must approach their opinions with an open mind. Sir Oliver Lodge has not hesitated to tell the world he has been in communication with his son Raymond in that other world. He firmly believes it and gives the evidence that satisfied his mind in a lengthy volume. We admire his honesty and candour, and, indeed, his courage. One must admit, I think, that the episode of the photograph cannot possibly be explained by any sort of telepathy between the living. And if this is correct, then it is difficult to account for it save on the lines he himself states as the explanation. And Sir Oliver Lodge does not stand alone. There are thousands of other people who believe in the fact of communication with the spirit world, and have found their faith in an after life wonderfully strengthened and established by it, and their sorrow turned into joy. The only warning one

would presume to offer, is that it is not the scientist but the psychologist who must have the last word in the matter, and so far he has not given an absolutely definite opinion. But to call all this a "New Revelation," as one writer does, is surely rather a misuse of terms. It is not new, for it is older than the Witch of Endor; and hardly a new Revelation, since our Blessed Lord revealed its certainty on the Mount of Transfiguration, when He spoke to Moses and Elijah from that other world. However, much as some minds may dislike all idea of psychical research with regard to their dear departed, we must admit that many believe that they have got help by this means; and if it is destined to strengthen and establish faith in an after life, we must be careful not to throw away the kernel of truth, which assuredly is there, but which at present seems rather overlaid with a mass of stupid frivolities.

To sum up, let us gratefully accept all the proofs that reason and science can give us, and let us thank God for Jesus Christ Who brought life and immortality to light. We may most certainly believe in the fact of continuity, and that personality persists beyond bodily death.

II

CHARACTER

OR OUR SOLE ABSOLUTE PERMANENT POSSESSION

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."—GAL. vi. 7.

WE have seen that death is not the end. Reason, Revelation, and Psychical Research all point to the fact that personality persists beyond bodily death. This being so, we all long to know what comes after.

Thirteen hundred years ago, a discussion was held in our country at the Court of King Edwin of Northumbria. In the old hall, lit up by torches, many men were seated to listen to the missionaries who had come to convert our country to the religion of Christ. After much discussion one old man arises and asks: "Can this new religion tell us anything of what happens after death? For the life of man is as that bird which has flown from the outer darkness through this lighted hall, out again into the darkness on the other side. Can this new religion solve for us the mystery—What comes

after death in the dark and dim unknown?" Perhaps this man was thinking, as so many are thinking to-day, of his warrior son, and he longed for an answer as to what had happened to his boy.

Yes, this question is the question of humanity all down the ages, as it gazes out into the darkness after its dead. What comes after death? Well, one day we shall get the full answer, when we die. We can only get the full answer this way. But part of the answer can be given now.

But first of all, it is necessary to clear away one misconception. There is still in the minds of many people the strange idea that at death the soul passes immediately to Heaven. This is seen from the loving but curious "in memoriam" notices at times in newspapers, such as:

> "We have lost, Heaven has gained,
> One of the best the world contained."

One wishes to be sympathetic with regard to such a loving and hopeful estimate, but at the same time it is necessary to say that we have no warrant for such a statement.

For when a man dies, he does not go straightway to Heaven or Hell. Even Christ Himself did not return immediately to Heaven after His Resurrection, but for forty days He was on the

borderland of both worlds. There was in Him a mingling of earthly conditions with the spiritual and heavenly, with some of the qualities of both. "Touch Me not," He said on the Easter morning to Mary Magdalene, "for I have not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto My brethren, and say unto them, I am ascending to My Father, and your Father; to My God, and your God." If Christ, who is the first-fruits of them that sleep, did not return immediately to Heaven at death, it is not to be expected that we shall. Further, it is to be added that no man at death is good enough for Heaven, and, thank God! no man bad enough for Hell. The Holy Bible teaches us that there is a place of waiting and preparation, discipline, and, if need be, suffering. All are waiting in that other world, from King Alfred to King Edward VII., from the soldiers who fell in the battle of Hastings to our own dear lads who "went West" in the last battle in Flanders.

The important climax in a man's history is not so much his death, as the Judgment Day of Christ.

The Holy Bible nowhere teaches that death fixes a man's position in the eternal scale. That is settled at the Judgment Day.

We know that there are at least three stages of human existence: this life, the life of the Near Hereafter, and the life of the Far Hereafter.

The importance of this stage, the earthly life, cannot be over-estimated, for on our behaviour here depends our position in that other world. But it is important to note that I use the word *position* and not *entry*. Our *entrance* into Heaven depends absolutely and entirely on the death of Jesus Christ, Who by the sacrifice on Calvary's Cross has thrown open wide the Golden Gates to all believers; but our *position* there depends equally, absolutely and entirely on ourselves.

Now let us see what we take with us into the intermediate life. Naked came we into this world, and naked shall we go out. We can take nothing earthly with us. Our dearest possessions must be left behind. Our cheque-books and money, so clung to here, will be of no value there. We cannot take them with us. Money in this world is not to be decried. It is "compressed force," and untold good can be done with it, and untold harm as well. But we are indeed foolish if we look upon it as an absolute possession of our own. It is not. It is rather a stewardship than a possession. And we shall have one day to account for our use of it, and perhaps some will have to account for the way they came to possess it. We foolishly say of a man who has died that he died *worth* so many thousands. It is untrue. He had to *leave* so many thousands, which is a

totally different thing. His real worth, be it great or small, was not in his money, but in his character, for that is our only absolute and permanent possession. And this remains with us for ever. It is the one and only thing which is entirely our own that we shall take with us into the great beyond. And one day we shall be face-to-face with our real self, and we shall find that five minutes after death will leave us the same person we were five minutes before death, save for the fact that we are in the world of spirit instead of the world of matter. And just as suffering either makes or mars a character here, so we get a hint in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus that the same law holds good there: for Dives, who lived an entirely selfish and self-centred life in this world, learns through suffering to think of others at last, and longs that his brothers may be warned.

It is not possible to believe in the mediæval doctrine of literal Hell-fire, for one cannot imagine how physical flames could hurt spiritual beings; but I do most assuredly believe in the permanence of character, the possibility of unutterable loss, and the Hell of agonizing remorse; and if, instead of preaching Hell-fire, so misunderstood of the people, we had boldly proclaimed the permanence of character and the agony of remorse, I am certain people would

think a great deal more of how they lived here below.

For, believe me, character is the only thing that matters. Character *is* Heaven or Hell: and we each make our own Heaven or Hell, and it begins here.

The whole of religion consists not so much in believing or doing, as being. To *be* good is the only thing that matters. A man may *do* good and not *be* good, and that's no good. Whereas a man who is good will do good, and that's all to the good. Matthew Arnold has told us that conduct is three-quarters of life, and in a sense this is of course true, so long as the other quarter consists of a right belief, for it still remains true that our conduct is to an extraordinary extent the result of our belief, though it may not be always consciously so. And herein lies the religion of the inarticulate, as Donald Hankey, the student in arms, has pointed out so well. He shows us how that the ordinary soldier has to such a large extent the Christian virtues of unselfishness, generosity, charity, and humility; but, sad to say, does not in the least associate these with the religion taught by the Church. This may be partly the fault of the soldier, and partly the fault of the Church; and where it is the fault of the Church we admit it with sorrow, and shall remember the lesson the student in

arms has taught us. But the fact remains that the ordinary soldier has somehow got hold of the one thing that matters in the long run—namely, that it is his duty to act up to his standard of character; and the joy of it is that that standard is, though he may not know it, essentially a Christian standard.

Now, as character is everything, let us see what it means. The word character is a Greek word, and it has three meanings: (1) An instrument for engraving; (2) the person who does it—that is, the engraver; (3) that which is cut in or engraven.

So we see that the character is really the person himself, that is, the engraver as well as the thing engraven. The real "I" is my character, my personality; and what I engrave on my personality is permanent. It becomes my character, and this is the only thing I can take with me, which is absolutely my own, into the next world. And it has a very stern side. You can never get away from yourself.

It is as if God gave man a marble slab, and every thought and word and deed is cut into the marble slab of your character.

> "The moving finger writes: and having writ
> Moves on; nor all thy Piety nor Wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it."

And we have to remember that this character of ours takes on a stereotyped form at last.

> "Sow a thought and you reap an act,
> Sow an act and you reap a habit,
> Sow a habit and you reap a character,
> Sow a character and you reap a destiny."

And this is the meaning of that terrible warning in the Holy Bible, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

We find the truth of the permanence of character, be it good or bad, in the words of St. John the Divine: "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still; and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still." What an appalling Hell! "And he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still; and he that is holy, let him be made holy still." What a glorious Heaven!

So we see that death is not the thing to fear so much, as our thoughts and words and actions. Many of our poets have taught us this truth, and perhaps none more consistently than Browning. In "An Epistle" containing the strange medical experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician, this point is clearly brought out. Karshish, "the picker up of learning's crumbs," in his wanderings comes to Bethany, and there sees Lazarus

who had been raised from the dead by Christ. He watches him with natural curiosity, and finds the following worth reporting to his master, Abib:

"Should his child sicken unto death—why, look
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of the daily craft!
While a word, gesture, glance, from that same child
At play, or in the school, or laid asleep,
Will startle him to an agony of fear,
Exasperation, just as like."

This conduct of Lazarus puzzles Karshish, but it is easily understood. Lazarus had been in that other world. He knew that in that other world the only thing that counted was character; that death in itself was nothing, but character everything. So the thought of death for his child did not disturb him; but he was filled with an agony of fear if ever he saw on the face of his child, or heard a word from his lips, that showed that the little one's character had a downward instead of an upward tendency.

And this is a lesson we all much need to take seriously to heart. Our eternal destiny depends on the character we make for ourselves here.

But if this teaching about character has its terribly real and dark side, it has, thank God! a bright side under the light of the Christian revelation.

If I am shut up to the thought of the inexorable law of cause and effect, if I am to reap absolutely what I have sown, then surely of all men we are most miserable, for which of us would dare to stand before God?

And so the Gospel, or good news, teaches us that our character is not so much like a block of marble on which we write some indelible engraving (for if that were true, nothing but fire could obliterate it, and in doing so, destroy it), but rather like a palimpsest manuscript. In the olden days when parchment or vellum was costly, very often the original writing would be washed off to make way for another and different writing. Sometimes this was so badly done that the original writing could be seen under the newer and fresher writing; and some of the precious manuscripts of the New Testament are like this. Now, we each start our life here with a clean sheet, and we write on it every day of our lives. If that writing is foul and wrong, may God give us grace to wash off the old writing in penitence and tears with the blood of Jesus. Thank God it can be done, for this is why Jesus Christ died. And then we can start afresh, and write a newer and fairer writing which will last to all eternity. But how careless we often are about the washing off of the old writing! How lightly we sin, how carelessly we repent! Just as in the palimpsest

manuscript the old original writing can sometimes still be seen through the newer writing, so on the manuscript of our lives, the ugly sins of old still show their heads because our repentance has been so insincere. They must be washed out entirely, if we would have peace. The Gospel shows us the way to do this. Let us see to it that we do it.

> "I hold it truth, with him who sings,
> To one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

The building of our character goes on day by day, and one day the building will be finished. A story is told of a bricklayer who found himself in heaven. An angel was showing him the glories of the place. Beautiful buildings after buildings were pointed out to him, but he seemed to be paying but scant attention. His eye kept wandering back to a little building of no extraordinary merit, though perfect of its kind. At last he said to the angel, "Yes, all those wonderful buildings you are pointing out to me are very beautiful, but to my mind this little building is the one I like best," pointing to the one that had all along claimed his attention. "I don't wonder at that," said the angel, "for that is your very own." "I don't understand you," said the bricklayer. And then the angel explained. "This

building you admire so much," said he, " is your very own, for you built it down below. You were an honest workman on that little earth, you laid your bricks truly, you flushed each course, you never scamped your work, and while you were building according to your best ideals down below, you were building the real up here, and now it is yours for ever." And so the bricklayer enjoyed for ever that which he had made his very own.

" We are building every day
In a good or evil way;
And the structure as it grows
Must our inmost self disclose,
Till in every arch or line
All our hidden faults outshine.

" Do you ask what building this,
That can show both pain or bliss,
That can be both dark or fair?
Lo! its name is character.
Build it well whate'er you do!
Build it straight and strong and true!
Build it clean and high and broad!
Build it for the eye of God!"

Believe me, dear brethren, the longer I live, the more convinced I am that the one and only thing that signifies is character. All other things signify nothing at all. What signifies is, how we stand before God here, and how we shall stand before God at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

'I am perfectly certain God sends no soul to Hell. The choice is in our own hands, and anyone who goes to Hell has committed suicide of the soul; for

> " To every man there openeth
> A Way, and Ways, and a Way.
> And the High Soul climbs the High Way,
> And the low soul gropes the low :
> And in between on the misty flats
> The rest drift to and fro.
> But to every man there openeth
> A High Way and a Low ;
> And every man decideth
> The way his soul shall go——"

III

CAPACITY

OR A STEWARDSHIP WHICH BECOMES A POSSESSION

"Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one."—St. Matt. xxv. 15.

We have seen that continuity of life is certain, and that character is permanent, and is the sole absolute possession that we take with us into that other world. What more may we learn? Many have desired to know more, and it is only natural.

When William Blake the painter-poet lay dying, he said he was going to that country he had all his life wished to see; and just before he died, he burst into singing of the things he saw.

"God forgive me," said Charles Kingsley, facing death, "but I look forward to it with an intense and reverent curiosity." And, indeed, one must be afflicted with spiritual stupidity or cursed by incurable frivolity if he has never thought of that new state into which he must one day enter, nor speculated concerning its conditions.

Now it is quite obvious that the only person who can tell us of that other world is the One Who has been there; and we find that we are not

told much. Jesus Christ knew all about it, but He seldom broke through His reserve. His life reveals a radiant knowledge, but His teaching preserves an almost rigid silence. As the Christ moves through the Gospels the sheen of Heaven is visible on Him, but He seldom draws aside the veil. And this was so for three reasons.

(1) Our Lord did not want to unsettle us. After all, our life has to be lived here. And the importance of our conduct here cannot be overestimated. If Christ had always been speaking of the next life, the importance of this might have been overlooked.

(2) One of the central points of our Lord's teaching is found in the words "The Kingdom of God is within you." It was no distant colony in the clouds He pointed to, but an institution set up in this present world. Heaven was to begin here below or it would never begin at all. He taught men that Heaven was a state of mind and heart rather than a place.

(3) We could not have understood Him had He spoken of that other life more fully. For we have no faculties to grasp it, and no corresponding experience to enable us to realize it. Suppose, for instance, we lived in a colony of blind and deaf men, and that one of us suddenly received the gifts of sight and hearing. And then there burst before us the glories of the sun-

set, or the gorgeous autumnal tints, or the perfect picture of moonlight playing on still water. Suddenly our ears were enraptured with the sighing of the wind, the gentle murmurs of the brook, or the liquid notes of the immortal bird "not born for death." And after that experience, suppose we had lapsed back again into blindness and deafness. How could we begin to explain to the rest of the colony what we had seen and heard? Nay, how could we even understand for ourselves the sights that met the eye or the sounds that entranced the ear?

Now we are the blind and deaf men in God's universe. Some of our friends have moved into the new world, where the eyes of the blind are opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. But we have no power of even imagining what their wondrous experience is like. We have not got the capacity to understand it.

Jesus Christ, however, is not the only One Who has been to that other world and returned to this. Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, spent four days there. What does he tell us? Tennyson has summed up all that there is to be said on this matter in two exquisite stanzas.

"Where wert thou, brother, those four days?
There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die
Had surely added praise to praise.

"Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unrevealed;
He told it not; or something seal'd
The lips of that Evangelist."

And then there is St. Paul, who was caught up into the third Heaven, caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Perhaps the reading in the margin is a more correct translation: "Which it is not possible for a man to utter." This is literally true. He could not utter them, and we could not understand even if it were told us; and it is for this reason we have no description of Paradise or Heaven except in earthly imagery of golden streets and gates of pearl.

And so there has arisen a conventional view of Heaven, which is fatuous in the extreme. It is a picture of reclining on clouds, singing eternal hymns, and idly harping on harps of gold; or of wandering aimlessly through the Paradise of God clad in white robes and wearing golden crowns, and doing nothing for ever and ever.

It is not to be wondered at that such a picture of the after life fails to attract ordinary people. A perpetual round of hymn-singing and psalmody and worship may appeal to a few most extraordinary saints, but it fails to attract the

majority. I know there is a profound underlying truth in the words of the hymn,

> "Prostrate before Thy Throne to lie
> And gaze, and gaze on Thee."

But it is far too deep for most of us ordinary people. We shall need much spiritual education before we can comprehend or enjoy such an experience.

Now, if the conventional Heaven be true, then it will certainly be a very dull place, and hardly an improvement on this earth.

But the next world is a far more wonderful place than this; and it is only owing to the stupid conception of Heaven that men have lost to such a large extent their interest in the life of the world to come.

For there lies before us a very wonderful future, beyond our fondest dreams. There is nothing which so touches some of us as a thing with untold potentialities wrapped up in it. Look at that boy with the clever head! What does the future hold for him? Look at that caterpillar enjoying life on the cabbage! One day it will be a beautiful butterfly. Look at that acorn on the ground! Wrapped up in it is the mighty oak, the king of the forest. And yet these miracles are only child's play compared with the wonders potentially wrapped up in our

poor selves. Not the wildest fairy-tale can suggest the wonder of its possibilities, as the human spirit passes out into the new adventure of the life beyond.

What, then, may we believe about the next life beyond the fact of continuity and the permanence of character?

Our Lord has drawn the veil in the two parables of the Talents and the Pounds. They are pictures of life here and life, not in the intermediate state, but in the Far Hereafter. From them we learn that we carry with us our capacity.

It is well to note that our capacity is not an absolute possession of our own in the same sense that character is. We make our own character, but we do not make our own capacity, though we may increase it. It is a talent given to us, a stewardship rather than a possession; and if not used, or not used aright, then Christ warns us it will be taken away from us in the next world, and given to him who will use it. "Take, therefore, the talent from him and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

In what way, then, can we use our capacity in the next world? In two ways. We shall have a

capacity for enjoyment and a capacity for service, and these two are Heaven.

(i.) *Capacity for Enjoyment.*—The enjoyment of Heaven consists in the knowledge of God and of Christ (for this is life eternal), and also, in the words of St. John, in the possession of God. In that other world God is ours, and we are God's, and the mutual relation, realized and enjoyed, is the deepest, the fullest life: and there will be the enjoyment, too, that comes of work and service. And it is natural to suppose that the intermediate life is to prepare us for this. Heaven is perfect happiness, but our share of that happiness depends on our capacity for enjoying it. The joy is there, the same for all in itself, but as our capacities vary here, so they will vary there. Suppose an artist and a somewhat inartistic man to be standing before a beautiful picture, a masterpiece by some famous painter. The picture is there for both alike, but the artist with all his training and artistic knowledge and skill is likely to get far greater enjoyment from the picture than his inartistic friend. Or suppose Beethoven's greatest symphony, the 5th in C minor, were being played before a lover of music and an unmusical friend. Perhaps it would be true to say that no one could see all the glories of it save the composer himself, and that there must be more in music than sound, since

Beethoven was deaf when he composed it. But which would get the greater enjoyment from the music? One would hear sounds in it, which the other would never hear. One would understand it with the love that comes from knowledge, and would love to listen when perhaps his friend grew tired of it.

And so we shall enjoy as much of Heaven as we are capable of enjoying; and as the joys of Heaven are joys of the mind and of the spirit, it would be well for us to try to begin to enjoy such things here below.

(ii.) *Capacity for Service.*—One cannot be surprised that people grow weary of the thought of perpetual idleness in Heaven. There is no idleness there. There is rest first of all, of course, perfect and complete; and then there opens out an ever-ascending and never-failing avenue of work for God. His servants shall serve Him. And our capacity for rendering Him service there depends on the way we have made use of our talents here. The Master commits five talents to the servant and he makes them ten. What reward does He propose to His servant? Is it release from labour and responsibility? Is it retirement and a pension? No, that surely would be waste! God can and will make better use of the man's exercised and developed gifts—his prudence, foresight, courage, and enterprise:

and the man, having served his apprenticeship here below, becomes himself a master, a ruler over many things, up above.

For life will be raised, not reversed. Work will not be closed, it will be emancipated. The fret will be gone, not the labour. The disappointment will disappear, not the responsibility; and our capacity will be ours for ever.

This is Christ's view of Heaven. So you see we are bound to gather the last penny of interest on our talents and make ourselves fit for our new work.

Jesus Christ has assured us that not one hour of labour, not one grain of attainment, not one honest effort, up to the moment when the tools of earth drop from our hands, but will tell on the after life. Life there will be a continual progress, with ever-increasing capacities for work and enjoyment in it.

What that work will be it is almost idle to inquire, and yet it is but natural to speculate.

I suppose it is true to say that we have only touched the fringe of such things as Science, Art, Music, Painting, Literature, Philosophy, and so on. Well, those who love them will have eternity to learn them better and love them more. Eternity itself will not be long enough to learn the deep things of God. Acts of human love and service will be possible for ever. I remember a

learned Cambridge librarian once expressing the hope to me that there would be books in Heaven. It is true to say that even if there are no books there (though in the Revelation of St. John books are mentioned), there will certainly be some other means of acquiring knowledge. But let me take what most appeals to me as a Priest. There is a saying, "Once a Priest, always a Priest." This is so far true that we are one day to be kings and priests for ever unto God. I love to think that God will want volunteers from his bravest and best to leave the Courts of Heaven (yet carrying Heaven with them), to tread the outer darkness to seek and to save that which is lost. Christ Himself went to preach to the spirits in prison, and turned that dark prison-house into a garden of hope. What if the inestimable privilege shall be ours of telling those who have missed the joys of Heaven what God hath done for our souls, and how that His mercy and love endureth for ever: for I grow more and more convinced that God will devise means whereby His banished be not expelled from Him for ever.

But be that as it may, there will certainly be some kind of ministry of service for those who have the capacity for it, and find their chief enjoyment in it.

Now this view of Heaven goes far to solve two great difficulties. First, there is the problem of

those lives cut off in their prime. How many thousands of such were cut off in the dreadful world-wide war God only knows! This view of Heaven teaches us that their lives are not wasted. Many of them were wanted for higher service. To very many of them death came as a promotion. One cannot sometimes help thinking that it is not fair to expect God to rest content with having that other world peopled with the aged only!

"'Shall I have nought that is fair,' saith he;
'Have nought but the bearded grain?
Though the breath of these flowers is sweet to me,
I will give them all back again.'"

That other world is a happier place because of the young lives there, and there is a glorious future of higher and better service for them there, without the awful shadow of sin, or the sad possibility of failure. There is also the other thought, that where your treasure is, there is your heart also. Perhaps this is one way whereby God draws your heart to Himself, for it is only with Him and in Him that He will give you your dear ones back again.

And secondly, it helps to solve the difficulty about those lives that have not "arrived." Many a one has talents which he never had an opportunity of using to the full. Providence, who gave them wings, placed them in a cage. It

may have been through the stress of poverty, or ill health, or the force of circumstances; but whatever it was, their lives were cramped through no fault of their own. Are we to believe that in such cases their talents are to be lost to them? By no means. Their talent was not buried with them in their coffin. It has rather been sown for the harvest. It will come into the open and blossom in another land. Their training was a severe one, perhaps the hardest of all, the training by waiting. One day they too shall have their opportunity. One day they too will come into their kingdom.

In conclusion, Heaven is no dull place of lethargy and idleness, but glorious beyond our conception; and both Isaiah and St. Paul tell us that: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

IV

COMPANIONSHIP

OR SHALL WE KNOW ONE ANOTHER?

"And in Hades he seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."—ST. LUKE xvi. 23.

So far we have seen that personality persists beyond bodily death, that character is our permanent possession, and that we shall have a capacity for enjoyment and service in that other world. And now we come to the subject of Companionship, or Shall we know one another?

This question is answered at once by another. George Macdonald somewhere asks: "Shall we be greater fools in Paradise than we are here?" This is not just a clever saying, but sound, sanctified common sense.

The poet John Gibson Lockhart writes:

"There is an old belief that on some solemn shore,
Beyond the sphere of grief, dear friends shall meet once more;
Beyond the sphere of Time, and Sin, and Fate's control,
Serene in changeless prime of body and of soul."

Let us in the first place differentiate between the fact and the method. The fact of recognition beyond the grave is certain, the method is difficult to understand. We often accept a fact, though the method of arriving at that fact is beyond our understanding. For instance, it is a fact that the sun is roughly ninety-one millions of miles distant from us. We accept the fact, though most of us have only the vaguest idea of the method whereby that fact was ascertained.

With regard to the fact of recognition, we have two guides, Reason and Revelation.

I.—Reason

(i.) *The Desire for Recognition.*—This desire is practically universal, and like the desire for immortality is a prophecy of its fulfilment. This longing is both ancient and modern. Sophocles the Greek poet makes Antigone say, in the prospect of death:

> "But a good hope I cherish that, come there,
> My father's love will greet me; yea, and thine,
> My mother; and thy welcome, brother, dear."

The old Roman religion in family worship was largely concerned with the cult of the Manes, the shades of departed ancestors. There were yearly festivals of the dead. And underlying all this

was undoubtedly a belief in some form of recognition in the underworld.

Dante's poem of his visit to the other world would never have been written had he not thought that some kind of intercourse between him and the dead, implying recognition, had been possible.

And our own hymns are full of this desire—

> "On that happy Easter morning
> All the graves their dead restore;
> Father, sister, child, and mother,
> Meet once more."

Now this longing implanted in us was not implanted by some mocking fiend, but by a Heavenly Father.

(ii.) *The Argument from Personality.* — We have seen that personality persists beyond bodily death. Illingworth, one of the greatest of the English writers on Personality, tells us that there are three characteristics of personality—namely, reason, will, and love. Hence we take these with us into the next world. And a moment's thought will show us that memory underlies all three. For Reasoning would be futile if we forgot the links of the chain of reason, or if we forgot what we were reasoning about. And Will would end in nothing if we forget what we willed to do. And Love would die a natural death if we had

not our memory of the loved one, or someone to love.

Therefore, Personality implies memory; and since personality persists beyond bodily death, our memory will likewise. And if we carry our memory with us, that implies recognition of others.

(iii.) *The Argument from Love.*—Love is the greatest power in the universe. Now there are certain things about which it is difficult—and to my mind quite unnecessary—to argue, but of which one is absolutely and entirely convinced. I have a dear father and mother and brother in God's Paradise, and believing as I do in life beyond the grave, I am quite certain that my love for them and their love for me will burst through all obstacles—if there are any—and that we shall see and know one another again. And if you ask me to prove this to you in the same way that I can demonstrate that two and two make four, I answer: "I neither can do it nor desire to do it." For love has nothing to do with arithmetic or argument. It is something felt, and those who have felt the power of love know beyond a shadow of doubt that even death itself cannot quench love, nor many waters drown it.

Therefore, so far as Reason is concerned, I see that the desire for Recognition in the next world

the fact of Personality, and the power of Love, all point to the same conclusion—that we shall know one another in the great Hereafter.

II.—Revelation

But when I turn from Reason to Revelation, I come out of the twilight of hope into the sunlight of certainty.

(i.) *The Old Testament.*—Let us be quite candid about the teaching of the Old Testament on this point. There is not much to be said. I know the Old Testament writers speak often in this strain: "He died in a good old age and was gathered unto his people, and they buried him." There are some who see a distinction between the gathering to his people and the burial: and as they are mentioned separately so often, it is quite possible the writers meant that their belief was that the departed joined his friends in the great beyond, but I do not wish to press it.

Nor would I wish to press David's lament over his dead child, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," as meaning more than that one day he would join him in the grave.

And with regard to the weird story of the Witch of Endor, when Saul recognized Samuel by the witch's description of him, I would not wish to build any argument upon it, though I

do not doubt it would perhaps be considered evidence of a sort by those interested in psychical research.

But I am neither disappointed nor surprised that the Old Testament teaches but little on this point. The Old Testament has but little to say in any case on the life beyond. It is far more concerned with this life. It was Jesus Christ Who brought life and immortality to light. Note the wonderful phrase: He brought them to light. They were there already, but it was He Who made them fully known.

(ii.) *The New Testament.*—But when we turn to the New Testament we find the question of recognition in the life beyond is practically assumed. It is taken for granted. In the wonderful story of the Transfiguration the three Apostles were apparently able to recognize Moses and Elijah, and yet of course they had never seen them in the flesh. Christ promises the dying thief that he should be with Him in Paradise that very day. There would have been but little point in the promise if the poor penitent were not to have the power of recognizing Christ in that other world. In the parable or story of the rich man and Lazarus, Dives is able to recognize not only the poor beggar he had seen so often at his door in this world, but Abraham also, in whose bosom he was reclining. And

Christ once said that "Many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven." Surely the guests would be able to recognize their hosts at this heavenly banquet. And there is also the advice given by Christ to the well-to-do: "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it shall fail (that is, when the wealth shall have come to an end), they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles." Surely that at least suggests recognition and a pleasant welcoming on the other side.

So we need not hesitate to assert that Revelation and Reason prove the fact of Recognition in the life beyond.

III.—The Method

But when we turn to the method whereby we shall recognize one another, we must admit at once that we are in the region of difficulties: and this, after all, should not surprise us, for we know but little in reality of the life hereafter. And let me once again insist that because we can know but little of the mode of recognition, we should indeed be foolish to throw away our belief in the fact.

However, something may be said about the

method. Let us first of all dismiss one theory which is quite untenable. We cannot believe in the pure and simple resuscitation of the natural body, and that we shall recognize one another there as we do here; for a physical resurrection is nowhere promised, and indeed St. Paul, with his usual directness, does not hesitate to call a man a fool who looks for a *physical* resurrection. "Thou fool," he says, "thou sowest *not* that body that shall be." He makes a careful distinction between the natural body and the spiritual body.

Now it is quite possible that we shall recognize one another through our spiritual bodies, with which one day we shall be clothed. This has been the view of many thinkers.

Tertullian, for instance, believed that the soul is the image of the body by which it was previously encased. Irenæus taught that spirits preserve the same form as the body had here.

And Swedenborg, amid much that was fantastic, believed that the spiritual body is a copy of the natural, an immaterial facsimile, which preserves in shadowy outline all its essential features.

Such a theory is neither absurd nor impossible, and for ought we know to the contrary it may be true. But you will see at once that such a correspondence between the spiritual body and the

physical would not always suffice for recognition. If you had not seen a person between childhood and maturity, you could not, from his body alone, even guess that it was he. You will remember how finely Shakespeare illustrated this difficulty carried over into the future life in "King John."

Constance, on hearing her son had been cast into prison and would probably be kept there till he died, laments that when she meets him in Heaven he will be an old decrepit man.

"Father Cardinal, I have heard you say
That we shall see and know our friends in Heaven,
If that be true, I'll see my boy again,
For since the birth of Cain, the first male child,
To him that did but yesterday suspire,
There was not such a gracious creature born;
But now will canker-sorrow eat my bud,
And chase the native beauty from his cheek,
And he will look as hollow as a ghost,
As dim and meagre as an ague's fit;
And so he'll die; and rising so again,
When I shall meet him in the Court of Heaven
I shall not know him; therefore never, never,
Shall I behold my pretty Arthur more."

The same lament might be made by every mother who leaves behind a child that is destined to attain old age. "I shall not know him," is the cry of the heart. Surely in this case recognition through the spiritual body would be almost im-

possible, for she left him a child and he died an old man.

There must be a better and a surer means. Let us see if we can discover it in the light of our present experiences.

Remember, a man is not his body, but his soul, his personality. We know something of persons' souls even through the coarse medium of the flesh. We do not recognize our friends merely by their visible features. We recognize them just as truly by their character, by the trend of their lives, by the atmosphere which surrounds them, and very often by their actions. Even with regard to the body alone we recognize a man, not merely by his shape, but by the tones of his voice and the expression of his face.

It is through a kind of instinct or intuition or sympathy — invisible qualities, remember — by which we are helped to recognize one another here. These qualities will be vastly increased there, and may be all-sufficient for recognition.

"Is it possible," asks a writer, "that as we move through the ambrosial air of Heaven, we could touch, in passing, the radiant robes of one whom we have supremely loved, without a thrill of recognition?" The meeting of a mother and her child beyond the veil, when they have been separated for many years, has been put into touching verse.

"It was not, Mother, that I knew thy face,
The luminous eclipse that's on it now,
Though it was fair on earth, did make it strange
E'en to me, who loved as well as knew thee:
It was my heart that cried out—'Mother!'"

Surely this is a help to us. You will remember how Dante speaks of a similar experience on his first meeting the angel form of Beatrice.

Recognition, then, may be effected through the mysterious attraction of sympathy. "It was my heart that cried out—'Mother!'"

But there is a further problem. Think of a soldier whose baby-boy was born and died during his father's absence at the war, and who never had the joy of beholding his son. Again, "I shall not know him," is the cry of the poor human heart.

If I cannot share his sorrow, I can sympathize with his difficulty. For, nearly forty years ago, I had a little brother who only lived two days, and I never saw him alive. Yet I long with a great longing one day to see him and know him. But again in such a case, recognition through the spiritual body is absolutely out of the question.

Do I, therefore, say, and must the soldier say: "I shall not know him"? And the difficulty is further increased by the thought that they will have outstripped us in the race of progress ever onward and upward.

What are we to say in cases like these? Well,

first of all I take refuge in the certainty of the fact of recognition — of that I am absolutely assured; and secondly, I remember that God's ways are higher than my ways, and His thoughts higher than my thoughts. The wise man is he who has learnt to say, "I do not know," in the many things that are beyond his knowledge. And though I may not know the method, I remain convinced of the fact. And it may be that our intuition and sympathy in that other world will leap across the gulf, and we shall know even *as we are known*. I use this phrase advisedly, for it is quite within the bounds of possibility that our dear ones there, though dimly remembered by us, and perhaps even unknown to us, and unseen by us here (as in the case of our soldier), will be among the first to welcome and recognize us there; and nothing can then detract from the sweetness of that Reunion.

But if you are still unsatisfied by this, what more can I say? Why, simply this. It is absurd to imagine that the means of Reunion are limited to any I can suggest. God can find a way of letting us meet and know one another when the right time comes. Cannot you trust the time and the manner to Him? Cannot you learn to be content to say:

"Soul of my soul, I shall meet thee again,
And with God be the rest!"

V

COMFORT

OR HOW WE MAY HELP THE DEPARTED

"The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.—2 Tim. i. 18.

In these talks of the after life we have so far dealt with four definite facts which anyone who believes in reason and revelation will certainly hold to be true.

We have seen that Continuity is a fact, and that Personality persists beyond bodily death, that Character is permanent and our sole absolute possession; that our Capacity is a stewardship to become eventually our own possession, and that we shall have a capacity for enjoyment and service in that other world; and finally, that Companionship or Recognition in that other world is a certain fact, though the method may be difficult to understand.

I have endeavoured to prove all these simply by reason and revelation, and I hope I have carried you with me.

If so, then I hope you will trust me when I invite you to follow me along a line of thought for which I cannot give such clear-cut and concise

proofs, but which nevertheless I believe to be true.

To-day we shall deal with the question of Comfort, or How we may help the departed.

You see, I propose dealing with the question of comfort from the unselfish point of view; not the comfort we may certainly have and expect for ourselves, but the comfort we may bring to our dear ones in the other world now.

But in order that we may not leave the selfish point of view of comfort entirely outside our discussion, let me just say three things on this point.

(i.) Our dear ones are "with Christ." We can leave them in His loving hands.

(ii.) Even if we are unhappy and doubtful about our dear ones in that other world, we can take comfort in the certain fact that there is hope beyond the grave, for nowhere in God's revealed word is there any statement that death fixes the final destiny of man — be it for weal or woe. Nay, on the contrary, we are expressly assured that Christ Himself went to preach to the disobedient spirits in prison, and converted their prison into a place of liberty and joyful hope; and we have the equally definite assurance that the Gospel was preached to them that are dead. And both these statements come to us on the authority of St. Peter. It was for this reason that Christ descended into Hades, as we say

whenever we repeat the creed. And if Christ, Who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, did it once, it is but reasonable to suppose that He will do it again, if not Himself, then surely by means of His ministering spirits. The impassable gulf in the history of Dives and Lazarus has been bridged once, when Christ crossed over; and we never read that He broke that bridge down when He returned. To do so would have been contrary to His very nature. The bridge is still there, and one day, perhaps, He will allow some of us to cross over it to seek those wandering in exile, for God will devise means whereby His banished ones be not expelled from Him for ever. "You have preached your last sermon," said a friend to Frederick Denison Maurice as he lay a-dying. "Yes," he replied, "but only my last sermon in this life."

(iii.) We have Christ's own assurance that the inequalities and injustices of this life will be reversed; for, once again, in the story of Dives and Lazarus, we see poverty exchanged for plenty, hardness for ease, neglect for honour. "Now he is comforted," are the assuring words of Christ. And we may sum up the whole question of comfort in the next world so far as we are concerned, both for ourselves and our dear ones, in what is one of the most beautiful sayings in the whole Bible: "And God shall wipe away all

tears from their eyes." It is hardly possible to wish for more than that.

And yet there are in these days many seeking further comfort about their departed. They long to be re-assured of their continued existence. They think that the séance may give them what they want. Without denying the possibility of it, I still would urge most strongly that the path is a very dangerous one, and to the Christian entirely unnecessary, if not unlawful. For we have in the Holy Eucharist a sure and certain way of coming into communication with our departed. Angels, Archangels, and all the company of Heaven attend that wonderful Communion of Saints.

This is the Christian's séance, if you will. And is it not possible that at that mystic service we may send messages across the stream to our dear ones, through Christ by His loving permission?

But let us now turn to our more immediate subject—namely, the question of comfort along the lines of how we may help the departed.

I think there are three methods: by thought, true love, and prayer.

I.—Thought

Who can measure the power of thought, that "magic of the mind," as Byron called it. We

believe in telepathy or thought transference, and that, too, without the medium of matter. Distance does not exist, apparently, in the higher forms of telepathy. If, then, spirit with spirit may meet, not only here in this world between man and man, but also between man and God, as we know it does, is it not possible that in that other world the spirits of the departed may be so attuned that they can catch the vibration of our thoughts about them here? For remember, thoughts are very real things.

> "I hold it true that thoughts are things
> Endowed with bodies, breath, and wings,
> And that we send them forth to fill
> The world with good results—or ill!"

We can send our thoughts out in this world for good or ill, and we certainly can send our thoughts out into the next world, for we constantly think of our dear departed. And I hold it is quite conceivable that some of our thoughts about those in the other world may be known to them, and that they love to be remembered by us.

And this is not just a theory evolved out of my own brain. It was held apparently by Maeterlinck, who, in his beautiful play "The Blue Bird," tells us how those two delightful children Mytyl and Tyltyl visited the Land of Memory. The Fairy told them beforehand that

in that land they would see their grandparents, and when the little boy asks, "How can we see them when they are dead?" the Fairy replied: "How can they be dead when they live in your memory? Men do not know this secret, because they know so little: whereas you, thanks to the diamond, are about to see that the dead who are remembered live as happily as though they were not dead."

And when they come to the Land of Memory they find it is all true, for the Granny says to the little boy: "Well, every time you think of us, we wake up and see you again. . . . We wait for a thought of the living to come and wake us." Now I admit this may be all a dream, but at the same time I believe it may be philosophically true. "Thought once awakened does not slumber," said Carlyle in "Heroes and Hero-Worship"; and I hope this will prove true in the thought I have put before you: for whether it is true or not, *this* certainly remains true, that to think about your departed is a good thing for you, as it reminds you of that other world into which you are hurrying; and it may be that it will bring comfort, by the permission of God, to your dear ones in the great beyond. None of us like to be forgotten. I lay this thought at your feet "for remembrance."

II.—True Love

But when I turn to the second method I feel I am on surer ground. It is the question of true love. Let us first of all be quite certain what true love means. Love is only love when there is not an atom of selfishness in it.

When we lose a dear one, we grieve, and it is natural and right. But our grief must not be excessive, for if it is, it tends to become selfish. We are thinking more of our sorrow and less of their promotion—for to the Christian death is promotion. "To depart and to be with Christ," says St. Paul, "is far better."

Sorrow at their departure is but natural, but let us remember "we sorrow not as those who have no hope." Those who have gone from us have entered into the next sphere, a sphere of progress ever onward, upward, heavenward, homeward, Godward; and if they know that we are grieving excessively for them, then their knowledge of it checks them in the race. I think it is certain that they know, for the dead are quite close to us, at any rate for a short period after death. Now, if you truly love them, you want to help them, not retard them.

Do you remember how beautifully Sir Oliver Lodge describes this idea in his book called "Christopher"? It is the life-story of a lad of

great ability and wonderful fascination, who makes the great surrender in the terrible war. His devotion to his mother was only equalled by his mother's love for him. It is a true story and not an imaginary one. Both mother and son realized that the chances of war were against his coming through safely, as we say. But he did come through safely in the higher sense, for in losing his life he in very truth saved it. Like the Christ, he, with many another, laid down his life for his friends. Mother and son had agreed together that if he were killed, they would help one another and not hinder one another: she by making a resolve that she would not by excessive grief hinder him in the upward path, but would help him by her prayers and love as far as she could; and he would help her in any way that was open to him in that other world.

This, dear people, is the right and Christian way of looking at death. It is the secret of true unselfish love, and thank God! not so hard to learn. You can in very truth help your dear departed by unselfish love, just as you can hinder them by excessive grief.

Mrs. Browning, the famous wife of a still more famous husband, wrote what was without doubt her most touching poem, on this very point. It is called "Isobel's Child." Her baby lay dying on her lap. She had prayed God to spare its

little life. And at night, worn out with eight days' watching, she had a dream—or was it sight?

Anyhow, she heard the infant speaking, though in very truth it had not yet learnt the art of speech.

"O mother, mother, loose thy prayer!
Christ's Name hath made it strong.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me,
With its most loving cruelty,
From floating my new soul along
The happy heavenly air.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
In all this dark, upon this dull
Low earth, by only weepers trod.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me!
Mine angel looketh sorrowful
Upon the face of God."

The mother learnt her lesson, in the poem.

"I changed the cruel prayer I made,
And bowed my meekened face, and prayed
That God would do His will."

So, dear brethren, let not our longing to have our dear ones back again bind and hold them earthward, when their aim and joy now are heavenward. You can help them by your unselfish love. There is an exquisite little poem by W. Barnes, who describes a mother's dream. She saw in the heavenly land a procession of children, "each in lily-white, with a lamp alight." But when her own child appeared in view, she

saw that the lamp he held did not burn. In her dream the little lad explained to her the reason: "Mother, your tears have quenched it!"

Poets see so often into the very heart of things. "Mother, your tears have quenched it," may perhaps remind us in future not to let our tears flow unrestrainedly when God removes any little one we love to His Glorious Garden of joy and peace.

III.—Prayer

And when I turn to the third method, I, for one, feel I am standing on an unshakable rock of conviction. It is the question of prayer. I know that many earnest Christian people shrink from the thought of prayers for the departed. And there has been reason for it. This beautiful old custom, the custom of the Jews, the custom of the whole Christian Church till the time of the Reformation, had grown at that time into great corruption. In their hatred of the sordid traffic in Masses for the dead, where priests made money out of the sorrows of the afflicted, they looked with suspicion on any prayer for the departed. And at length they even began to think that such prayers were actually wrong.

But we must never forget the wise saying, "Abusus non tollit usum." The abuse of a thing does not take away its lawful use.

This is hardly the place to prove the rightful-

ness of prayer for the departed. I wish I might take it for granted, and to a certain extent perhaps in these days one may. The war has brought once again to the surface this deep instinct of the soul. Thousands are praying for their lads who have fallen. Let us be honest and courageous, and tell them they are quite right in doing so. For although it is true to say that Jesus Christ is absolutely silent on the matter, yet He found it the universal practice of the Jews, and there can be no doubt that Christ Himself must have joined in the commemoration of the departed time and again when He went into the synagogue, as His custom was, every Sabbath day.

And if there is but one generally acknowledged prayer for a departed Christian in the New Testament—namely, St. Paul's prayer for Onesiphorus, as in the words of my text—no disapproval of such prayers is either expressed or implied.

And as Dr. Mason has written: "Probably no well-informed person doubts that prayers for the dead, and in particular, prayers at the Eucharistic Sacrifice, are as ancient as Christianity itself, and have as complete a sanction as the universal custom of the Church can give."

The Church of England has never condemned prayers for the dead, and even in our Prayer-

Book of to-day, which we have to remember is a compromise, so dearly loved of Englishmen, we find in the prayer for the Church Militant a commemoration of the departed, and in the post-Communion prayer of oblation a distinct prayer for the dead when we pray that "we and all Thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins and all other benefits of His passion."

"We and all Thy whole Church." Now those who were responsible for the retention of this sentence at the revision of the Prayer-Book tell us that it was deliberately retained in order to include both the living and the dead.

And there are, besides, other prayers for the dead in the Litany and the Burial Service. But I need not labour this point. The question nowadays among thoughtful people is no longer, "May we pray for the departed?" but rather, "What shall we pray about for them?"

If, dear brethren, you believe that at death a man's eternal future is irrevocably fixed, be it for weal or woe, then prayers for the dead are futile, and in a sense almost blasphemous, as though any prayer of ours could alter the unchangeable purpose of the Unchangeable God. But this is not the teaching of the Bible. The Bible is full of stern warnings: it is also full of unquenchable hope. There is, so our Lord suggests, forgiveness in the next world. Remember how he once

spoke about blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This is the sin, He said, which is not forgiven in this world nor in that which is to come. Surely here we may see that our Lord meant at any rate to suggest that there are some sins which may be forgiven in the next world.

And since this is so, I am not surprised that in this time of stress and anxiety caused by the war, our leaders in the Church have overcome their customary caution, and issued a prayer which must have brought unspeakable comfort to thousands of mourners. We have been authorized to pray in public worship that God will grant to our departed soldiers forgiveness of all their sins. And remember, this was issued by the present Archbishops of Canterbury and York, who with their wonderful Scotch insight and caution cannot be accused of having acted in a hurry or without careful premeditation and prayer. We are thankful to them for their guidance. So we may pray for the forgiveness of sin for the departed. For after all, we are not the judges of our brother men. Even in the worst man there is the divine spark somewhere, and if the man has not succeeded in quenching it in this world (as may alas! perhaps be possible, God only knows), then surely Providence will find some means of fanning it into a flame, for He takes no delight in breaking the bruised

reed, nor in quenching the smoking flax. Judge not your brother man, but pray for him both here and there. But judge him not in any case, for

> "In men whom men condemn as ill,
> I find so much of goodness still.
> In men whom men pronounce divine
> I find so much of stain and spot,
> I hesitate to draw a line
> Between the two where God has not."

Therefore, dear brethren, in the first place I pray for the departed that they may be forgiven their sins through the blood of Jesus.

And secondly and lastly: The next life is one of progress, where He Who hath begun a good work in us will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ. Surely our prayers can help here. We may and must pray that, in their struggle upwards towards holiness and God, they may be wonderfully encouraged and helped. For they are not perfect yet, but are going on unto perfection. Pray that they may go from strength to strength, until every one of them appears before God in Zion.

Professor Westcott at Cambridge, in lecturing on St. John's Gospel, used to love to dwell on the "many mansions" of which our Lord spoke. He told us the Greek word used suggested not only repose but progress. Both are combined in this vision of the future. So our prayers may be of untold value to them in the various stages of

their upward march, as we ask God to grant them refreshment, light, and peace, on the one hand, and help and encouragement in their progress and advancement on the other. I long to see All Souls' Day restored to its rightful place in our Calendar. It used to follow immediately after All Saints' Day. On the latter we are taught to pray for all the faithful departed; and on the former the Church used to pray for the souls of all men. God grant that their and our rightful heritage may be restored to us soon by lawful authority.

But even if we do not see this restoration in our time, I, for one, shall not cease to pray for the souls of humanity, and that it may please God "to have mercy upon all men."

"How can I cease to pray for thee? Somewhere
In God's great universe thou art to-day.
Can He not reach thee with His tender care?
Can He not hear me when for thee I pray?
What matters it to Him, Who holds within
The hollow of His hand all world, all space?
Thou that hast done with earthly care and sin,
Somewhere thou livest and hast need of Him.
Somewhere thy soul sees higher heights to climb,
And somewhere still there may be valleys dim
That thou must pass to reach the heights sublime.
Then all the more because thou canst not hear
Poor human words of blessing, will I pray.
Oh, true, brave heart! God bless thee wheresoe'er
In God's great universe thou art to-day."

VI

CHRIST

OR THE STATE OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."—PHIL. i. 6.

IT has been quite clearly revealed to us that there are three stages of existence through which we men and women must pass. First, the Earthly stage; secondly, the Intermediate life; and thirdly, the life of the Far Hereafter.

Whether there are more it is impossible to say for certain, though some have thought that the soul of man does not start its existence in the earthly stage, but that it had a previous existence elsewhere. I presume this idea arose in part from a study of the nature of the soul.

You will remember how Wordsworth in his ode on "Intimations of Immortality" puts this thought into exquisite language.

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:

Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.
Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

But whether this is so or not, we cannot tell. Nor, on the other hand, can we tell for certain whether there are other stages of human existence beyond the one we call the Far Hereafter: though we can catch some idea of its possibility in the many mansions mentioned by Christ, and in two phrases of St. Paul, who speaks of the æons of the æons, and of being caught up into the third Heaven. All this may be possible, and it will not be amiss to remember it, if only it will help to remind us of the wonderful future stretching out age after age, æon after æon, for us men and women made in the image of the Eternal God.

However, let us keep strictly to what is revealed. We know for certain of three stages—the Earth life, the Intermediate life, and the Heaven life. And these three are sharply divided, the one from the other, by a crisis. Between the earth life and the intermediate life there comes the crisis we call death; and between the intermediate life and the Heaven life there comes the crisis called the Judgment Day. No soul is finally judged till then.

And until that great day of Jesus Christ, when the books will be opened, we are at school, first here in the earthly life, and secondly at the finishing school in the intermediate life. And just as our schooling in this earthly stage is to fit us for life in the intermediate state, so our schooling in the intermediate state is to fit us for the life of Heaven.

It is about this schooling in the intermediate state, for the faithful departed, that I wish to speak to-day.

Some years ago an old Indian Mutiny officer was narrating to some of his friends wonderful stories of the skirmishes, battles, sieges, and hair-breadth escapes he had passed through in that awful time in India. They listened to him with breathless attention. But when he added, "I expect to see something much more wonderful than anything I have been describing," they were amazed, for he was over seventy years of age. At their looks of inquiry he said: "I mean in the first five minutes after death."

I have often wondered what he thought he would see. And I am certain he found it far exceeding his highest imaginations.

"Five minutes after death!" A thought naturally arises that it is hardly likely that we shall immediately after death awake at once to a full consciousness of our new surroundings.

When we are born into *this* world, it takes some considerable time for us to become conscious of our environment: it is only gradually, very gradually, that we come to a consciousness of the new and strange world in which we find ourselves; and, poor weak little strangers that we are, what would have happened to us if it had not been for a mother's love and care! Is it a wild fancy to suggest that in that other world the same kind of process will take place, and that only gradually shall we grow accustomed to the startling and strange world of spirits? And perhaps, please God! we shall find some great loving Mother Angel Spirit to care for us there, as, thank God! we found a loving mother to care for us here.

But be that as it may, it is quite certain that we shall one day enter the intermediate state; and naturally we long to know something about it. We cannot and do not know much, but we do know something.

Let us turn once again to Reason and Revelation.

I.—Revelation

The New Testament is very reserved about the state of the departed, but twice at least does Christ draw aside the veil for an instant.

(i.) In the story of the rich man and Lazarus,

we see the soul of the beggar in Abraham's bosom—that is, of course, reclining next to Abraham at a banquet. What a striking contrast is drawn between his past and his present state! Here he endured neglect, poverty, and hunger; whilst there he finds honour, plenty, and ease. It is the picture of a man at rest.

(ii.) To the penitent highwayman on the cross who asked to be remembered when Jesus came into His kingdom, the Lord answered: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." And as Dr. Swete has beautifully expressed it: "Instead of the wood of the Cross, the trees of the Garden of God; instead of the fever-thirst of the crucified, the river of the water of life. And in what company? 'With Me.' And when? Not when I come into My kingdom, in days long distant; but this day, the day of thy death."

The beggar's rest in Abraham's bosom, the robber's rest in the Garden of God, are not postponed to the Resurrection, but follow death at once.

This thought of rest in the intermediate state is also brought out in the Revelation of St. John, who writes: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." "They rest from their labours"; for work in Paradise is not labour. Their works follow with them: not one is forgotten or without the promise of reward.

So in the first place Revelation teaches us quite clearly that in the intermediate life there is, for the faithful departed, rest perfect and complete. But it is to St. Paul that we owe the far more beautiful thought that the faithful departed are "with Christ." This is the one contribution he makes to our knowledge of life after death. From his second Epistle to the Corinthians and his Epistle to the Philippians, we learn that the Christian dead are "absent from the body," but "present" or "at home with the Lord." They are "with Christ," which is "very far better" than being in the body.

Here, then, are the two certain facts about the state of the faithful departed:

They are at rest.

They are with Christ.

This is all that has been clearly and definitely revealed to us about life in the intermediate state, but surely it is sufficient. Knowing these two facts, we know enough to assure us of a glorious future.

II.—Reason

Let us, then, take these two facts, "At rest" and "With Christ," and endeavour to see what we may reasonably deduct from them. We have a perfect right to do this, for our reasoning powers were given to us by God to be used. We

will approach our subject with reverence and reserve, and we will remember that there is much that will be beyond our powers of thought and reason; but something we surely may learn by God's good grace.

(i.) And first, "At rest."

This does not mean an idle existence: that would soon become wearisome in the extreme. The best form of rest here in this world is often change of occupation. And further, it is the body that feels fatigue, and the poor tired body is left behind in the grave; and the fatigue of mind which sometimes we feel is not a thing which exists in itself, strictly speaking, but is only the result of its association with the frail body: and when the spirit of man is freed from the trammels of the body, it can and will feel no fatigue.

So we see that "rest" in the intermediate state of pure spiritual being by no means need imply cessation from work.

This thought of rest in Hades, though it may not be enough to answer all our questioning nor to satisfy all our curiosity, is yet enough to deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage: enough to make death to all sincere Christians the gate of life, the entrance into a state which is far better than our best here.

And further, this thought of rest is associated with the thought of comfort: for we have our Lord's assurance of this in the words He used of Lazarus, "Now he is comforted."

It is this thought of comfort that makes me feel certain that the Romish idea of Purgatory, as depicted, for instance, in Dante's Purgatorio, is utterly repugnant to the Word of God. It is not because it is Romish that I reject it, but because I believe it to be quite contrary to what is revealed to us by Christ. This does not mean that I do not believe in *a* Purgatory or school of purification and discipline, for I believe in it with all my heart and soul; and I suppose it is true to say that if the unfortunate connotation of the word "Purgatory" could be got rid of, few would object to the name.

Rest and comfort for the faithful departed are absolute facts; and as the Wisdom of Solomon expresses it, "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them." Thank God, we shall be safe, safe for evermore, safe in the arms of Jesus.

(ii.) And secondly, "With Christ."

First of all let us see what this means, and then what it implies.

"With Christ." What does it mean?

The Apostles were "with Christ" during His earthly sojourn. The risen Saints will be "with

Christ" one day in Heaven. But how can the spirits of the departed be "with Christ" in Paradise? We can hardly argue from the case of the dying thief on the cross, to whom Christ said, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise," for Christ only remained in Hades for the few hours between His death and Resurrection, and then His human spirit left Hades and rejoined His Body, and in the risen Body ascended to the Father.

How, then, can He still be with the spirits of the faithful departed in Paradise?

Well, we are assured that we shall be "with Christ," so there must be some meaning in it. Let us see if we can find it.

In one sense Christ is with us here on earth. The charter of the Church is found in His own words, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age," and, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them."

We believe in the real Presence of Jesus Christ with His Church, in the Holy Eucharist, and in the whole life of faith. But this Presence which we have here is absence when compared with His Presence with those who have died in the faith. This is the daring truth which St. Paul states in the words "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." He does not

mean, of course, that we are really absent from Him, but that we do not and cannot realize His Presence. But we shall realize it when we come to leave the body. It will still be a spiritual Presence: for St. Paul does not say that we shall see the Lord: that is reserved for the risen body, with its new faculty of vision; but he says that we shall be consciously and constantly with Him—as consciously, as constantly as the Twelve were in Galilee, only as spirits with Spirit. There is nothing more than this in Heaven itself, except that there we shall "see Him as He is." The utmost that the Apostle can say of the life after the Resurrection is, "So shall we ever be with the Lord," and, but for the word "ever," he says the same of the faithful departed.

I do not give you this on my own authority. I have quoted again, and somewhat fully, from Dr. Swete's thoughtful sermons on "The life of the world to come."

So the Presence of Christ in Paradise is a real Presence, and of course a Spiritual one.

And this brings me to my last point: What does this Presence imply?

I do not hesitate to say that it implies at least two things: Purification and Perfecting.

(i.) The first and greatest will be Purification. Among the "logia" of our Lord there is this saying of His, "He that is near Me is near the

fire," and in our oldest Gospel it is recorded that Christ said: "Everyone shall be salted with fire." This is the fire of love, and it will burn up, we may well believe, all the imperfections which still cling to the Saints when they depart this life: for, so far as we can judge, since death certainly does not change character, as we have seen, they carry with them their imperfections into the unseen world.

This, dear brethren, is the true Purgatory, not a fire of penal suffering, as the Middle Ages imagined, but the All-holy Presence of Jesus Christ, in which all that is not holy must melt away and vanish. And it is the realized Presence of Christ that will do this work in the soul. Believe me, we shall welcome this fire of love—nay, I would go further, and say that I, for one, would welcome, if need be, a fire of suffering, if so be that my imperfections and impurities might be burnt out so that I might become pure even as He is pure.

You will remember how touchingly Cardinal Newman puts this in the "Dream of Gerontius." It is the Angel who is speaking to the departed soul:

"When, then—if such thy lot—thou seest thy Judge,
The sight of Him will kindle in thy heart
All tender, gracious, reverential thoughts.
Thou wilt be sick with love, and yearn for Him,

And feel as though thou couldst but pity Him,
That one so sweet should e'er have placed Himself
At disadvantage such, as to be used
So vilely by a being so vile as thee.
There is a pleading in His pensive eyes
Will pierce thee to the quick, and trouble thee.
And thou wilt hate and loathe thyself; for, though
Now sinless, thou wilt feel that thou hast sinned
As never thou didst feel; and wilt desire
To slink away, and hide thee from His sight;
And yet will have a longing aye to dwell
Within the beauty of His countenance.
And these two pains, so counter and so keen—
The longing for Him, when thou seest Him not;
The shame of self at thought of seeing Him—
Will be thy veriest, sharpest Purgatory."

(ii.) And the second great effect of the realized Presence of Christ will be the perfecting of the spirit in knowledge and love, and in all the moral image of God.

God puts us to school in this life for the life to come, and there He puts us to a higher school to prepare us for Heaven. St. Paul is confident of this, for he says that He which began a good work in you (that is, in this world) will go on perfecting it until the day of Jesus Christ: that is to say, right through the intermediate life up to the day of Jesus Christ, which is the Great Judgment Day.

Now this higher education is to fit us for Heaven, and as we are distinctly told that

nothing imperfect can enter Heaven, it follows that the work of perfection, which certainly is not done here, must be done in the intermediate life. And with this may go our training for the higher service of the great future, for we cannot suppose that the conscious life of the faithful departed is spent in inactivity: they are surely serving Him, while they wait; and by serving Him there, are learning to serve in ways far beyond our imagination, when the great Day of Christ will bring them new powers and opportunities.

And at that great Day Christ will call us forth, purified and perfected, from Paradise, the Garden of God, into Heaven, His Palace, to share for evermore His glorious risen life. Then, and not till then, will our spirits be clothed upon, not with the body of our humiliation, for that is done with for ever when it is laid in the grave, but with a body fashioned anew and conformed to the body of His Glory.

Our Resurrection body will be such as the Glorified Body of our Lord now is. It will be the image of the Heavenly Body of our Lord. Not the Body of the Risen Christ, but, as St. Paul says, the Heavenly, the Ascended Christ.

There are, St. Paul points out, "celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial"; bodies suited for life in Heaven and bodies suited for life on earth. Our

present bodies are "terrestrial," they presuppose a life of the senses, they tie us to the earth. Our future bodies will be "celestial," adapted to the spiritual and eternal things in the midst of which our future life is to be passed.

Hold fast, then, dear brethren, to the fact that one day God will raise up a splendid and deathless companion for your redeemed spirit.

> "Oh, how glorious and resplendent,
> Fragile body, shalt thou be,
> When endued with so much beauty,
> Full of health, and strong, and free,
> Full of vigour, full of pleasure,
> That shall last eternally."

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